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ABSTRACT

The Recreation and Leisure Inventory (RLI) was developed to assist disabled adolescents and young adults in determining their recreation and leisure preferences. The RLI had three prototypes, all of which used an interview format to assess participants' preferences for recreational and leisure activities. The Needs Assessment for Adults with Developmental Disabilities was first modified in 1993 and used with 46 senior citizens with mental retardation living in southern Mississippi. In 1994, the instrument was again modified for use with 70 mentally retarded adults ranging in age from 21 to 65 years. Modification and revision of the instrument has also been directed toward use with adolescents with mental retardation. The revised instrument was field tested on 49 adolescents ages 9 to 19 years with mental retardation living in rural southern Mississippi. This instrument was the predecessor that led to the development of the RLI. The RLI is presently being field tested with mentally retarded adolescents and young adults in southern Mississippi, Arkansas, and Indiana. Data are collected using an interview format in which participants are asked to indicate preference (like/dislike) for 36 activities. In addition, participants indicate the frequency of participation in each activity and their preference for participating "alone" or "with others." If "with others" is selected, the participant is asked to indicate with whom and whether this person has a disability. Responses regarding frequency of participation are grouped into four categories: never, sometimes, weekly, and daily. Demographic information such as age, gender, place of residence, classroom placement, and participation in community or school recreational programs is recorded. The interviews and data collected from this process will be the basis for additional modifications of the RLI. Results indicate that disabled adolescents and young adults have preferences similar to teenagers from the general population and reflect a desire by adolescents with mental retardation to be involved in more active, team-oriented sports. (Contains 14 references.) (LP)

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A RECREATION AND LEISURE INVENTORY: DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION

Similarities between recreation and leisure preferences for individuals with disabilities and their peers without disabilities have been discussed for some years (Matthews, 1982). The recommendation that recreation and leisure activities be planned around the individual's "choice" is receiving more attention today (Glausier, Whorton, & Knight, 1995).

Freedom to exercise choice for personal activities is a valued right that most people, oddly enough, give little consideration to on a daily basis. But, for individuals with disabilities this "exercise of choice" is often made for them on the assumption that they do not have the ability to make their own decisions (Summers, 1986). This assumption constitutes a form of "handicapism" which is similar to sexism and racism (Bogdan & Biklen, 1977). Handicapism can be seen in several different ways including stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. "Many people view adults with retardation as childlike (stereotyping), which leads to the belief that they are incapable of making decisions for themselves (prejudice), which in turn results in others making decisions for them without their input or knowledge (discrimination)" (Beirne-Smith, Patton, & Ittenbach, 1994, p. 61).

Certainly the right to participate in the decision making process about one's life is clearly important. According to Kaplan (1996), "Control over the environment means making choices and showing one's preferences (p. 618)". The significance of an individual's right to make their own decisions is also documented in the Rehabilitation Act amendments of 1992 (P.L. 102-569) with the statement:

> Congress finds that . . .
> Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of an individual to -
> A. Live independently;
> B. Enjoy self-determination;

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C. Make choices;
D. Contribute to society;
E. Pursue meaningful careers;
F. Enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social cultural, and educational mainstream of American society (106 STAT. 4346).

Transition is legally mandated for adolescents by the age of 16 years or younger if deemed appropriate for that individual (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] of 1990); their interests and preferences regarding planned activities must be considered. Transition for adolescents includes the social areas of life.

Recreation and leisure activities should be viewed as lifelong. Interests cultivated during adolescence may be further developed and enjoyed during the entire lifespan. Reasons cited for lack of participation in recreation and leisure activities have been well documented in the literature: lack of recreational opportunities, no leisure skill training, lack of friendships outside their environment, unaware of when and where events are to occur, and transportation (Dattilo & Murphy, 1991; Sparrow & Mayne, 1990; Hamilton & Anderson, 1983; Matthews, 1982; and Schleien, Porter, & Wehman, 1979).

With choice comes independence. "Independence involves living one's own life the way one wants to live it within one's ability to do so and in a way that is consistent with one's own values and preference" (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1985, p. 109). Exercising choice and autonomy is a large part of the adolescent phase of the life cycle. Transition planning facilitates the goal of independence by providing adolescents with disabilities a voice in their personal futures planning. Recreation and leisure should be an integral part of this planning. The benefits of recreation and leisure go unchallenged; improved quality of life, satisfaction with life and health have all been linked to recreation and leisure.

The *Recreation and Leisure Inventory (RLI)* was developed to assist in determining the recreation and leisure preferences of adolescents and young adults with disabilities. The philosophy behind the development of the inventory may be summarized by the statement, "If you want to know what recreation and leisure activities an individual prefers, ask them."

The *RLI* had three prototypes. All of the previous instruments used an interview format. The participants were asked to indicate preference from a list of activities provided and were given an opportunity to express choice using open ended response questions.

The Needs Assessment for Adults with Developmental Disabilities by See, Ellis, Spellman, & Cress, 1991 was developed and field tested with 60 aging adults with developmental disabilities. It was first modified by the present authors in 1993, and used with 46 senior citizens with mental retardation living in south Mississippi. The participants ranged in age from 50 to 89 years and had been previously diagnosed as having mental retardation at a younger age. Their preference of activity and frequency of participation was determined from this survey.

In 1994, the instrument was revised and modified and used to ascertain the recreation and leisure preferences of adults with mental retardation. The instrument was field tested on 70 adults with mental retardation living in south Mississippi. Their ages ranged from 21 to 65 years with the average age being 39.7 years. The standard deviation was 10.6. All participants had been diagnosed with mental retardation at a younger age.

Modification and revision of the instrument has also been directed toward use with adolescents with mental retardation. This instrument was field tested on 49 adolescents with mental retardation living in rural south Mississippi. Their ages ranged from 9 to 19 years. This instrument was the predecessor which led to the development of the *Recreation and Leisure Inventory (RLI)*.

The *Recreation and Leisure Inventory* is presently being field tested in south Mississippi, Arkansas, and Indiana. The target population is adolescents and young adults with disabilities. The age range is middle school years (12 years) through the adult years; the emphasis however, will focus on adolescents and young adults. Its purpose is to assist in the identification of recreation and leisure preferences of adolescents and young adults with disabilities.

Data are collected using an interview format to which participants are asked to indicate preference (like/dislike) for 36 activities. In addition to responding "yes" or "no" to the 36 listed activities, participants indicate the frequency of participation for each activity and preference of participating "alone" or "with others." If "with others" is selected, the participant is to indicate "with whom" and also answer "yes" or "no" to the question, "Does this person have a disability?" Responses regarding frequency of participation are grouped into one of four categories; never, sometimes, weekly, and daily. Demographic information such as, age, gender, place of residence, classroom placement, participation in community or school recreational programs is recorded.

The interviews and data collected from this process with the adolescent age group will be the basis for additional modifications of the *RLI*. Results from the *Recreation and Leisure Survey* instrument used with the rural adolescents with mental retardation show that the participants preferences reflect inclinations very similar to teenagers from the general population. In the earlier study with adolescents, the top five activities from the suggested list were: TV (48); Eat Out (46); Music (44); Exercise (41); and Shop (36). "Activities enjoyed doing" listed by the participant in an open ended question were: TV (18); Basketball (14); Listen to Music (8); Football (7); and Nintendo (5). Activities in which the participants would like to participate in, but does not were listed as: Basketball (8); Be on a football team (6); Swim (4); Baseball (3); and Soccer (3). The data reflect a desire by adolescents with mental retardation to be involved and participate in more active, team-oriented sports.

As adolescents and young adults move toward mature adulthood, it is important to focus on the importance of lifelong leisure activities. These issues are not only important for the individual with disabilities, but also for the educators, administrators, service providers, and families. Individuals not only need to have a choice of activity but also the option of selecting their fellow participants.

Recreation and leisure is an integral part of life. Quality of life, satisfaction with life, and health have all been associated with recreation and leisure involvement. Lifelong recreation and leisure enjoyment begins prior to the mature years of life. It is crucial to encourage the development of recreation and leisure activities in adolescents and young adults with disabilities. Expression of interest and choice by adolescents with disabilities is mandated by law. These are "rights," not granted "privileges." Every effort should be made to support adolescents and young adults with disabilities in the fulfillment of their right of expression of interest and choice in recreational and leisure activity opportunity pursuit.

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